

REMARKS

The final Office Action dated May 31, 2007 and Advisory Action dated August 27, 2007 have been carefully considered.

Claims 2-10 were pending, with claim 1 having previously been canceled, without prejudice or disclaimer. By this Amendment, claim 2 has been amended to clarify the claimed subject matter, claims 7-9 have been canceled, with out prejudice or disclaimer, and claim 5 has been amended to depend from claim 2. Accordingly, claims 2-6 and 10 are now pending and presented for continued examination, with claim 2 being the sole independent claim.

Claims 2-4 and 7-10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as purportedly unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 4,871,585 to Kano et al. in view of U.S. Patent No. 2,328,203 to Duggan. Claims 5-7 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as purportedly unpatentable over Kano in view of Duggan and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,902,642 to Horiki et al.

Applicants submit that independent claim 2 as amended is patentable over the cited art.

Two figures (demonstrative figures A and B) are attached to this amendment to illustrate some of the differences between the claimed subject matter and the cited art applied against the claims.

Fig. A illustrates an example of the subject matter that is now claimed. As seen in Fig. A, the flange is hollow because it is formed by expanding a thermoplastic sheet or film at a portion that would be at the second side of the hole when said masking member is formed by vacuum and/or pressure forming, and the flange covers an area of the second side of the part around and beyond the circumference of the second side end of the hole to keep paint or other coating agent from getting into the hole. The hollow flange is easily deformed by pressing it against the inside wall of the hole when the masking member is fit into the hole.

Fig. B illustrates applicants' understanding of the cited portions of Kano. In Kano, the

flange is not hollow so that if a moist and thus swelled masking member is being fit into the hole such swelling may make it difficult to easily and accurately fit the masking member into the hole, and further, since Kano's masking member has no flange to cover an area around the circumference of the hole, paint mist may invade into the hole by capillary action.

In Duggan, Fig.2 illustrates a structure in which rib 21 is not hollow and not deformable.

For these reasons, applicants submit that the masking member of claim 2 of the present application is patentably distinct from the teachings of the cited references, both in structure and in the way it fits and cooperates with a part that has a hole.

The additional secondary reference, Horiki, was cited for its showing of multiple insertion members in a single sheet.

However, applicant does not find teaching or suggestion in the cited art of a masking member attached to a part of an article having at least one open hole penetrating the part from a first to a second side of the part, wherein the masking member is formed by vacuum and/or pressure forming a thermoplastic resin sheet or film and comprises (a) at least one fitting part that fits into the at least one open hole and has a first side and a second side, (b) a collar at the first side of the fitting part, at least a part of the collar being at the first side of the part, outside of the at least one hole, and having a greater circumference than the hole at the first side of the part, and (c) *a hollow flange at the second side of the fitting part, at least a part of the flange being at the second side of the part, outside of the at least one hole, and also having a circumference greater than the hole at the second side of the part to cover the circumference of the second side end of the hole, the hollow flange being formed by expanding the second side end of the hole when the masking member is formed by the vacuum and/or pressure forming*, wherein the collar and the flange protect the at least one open hole from contamination by material used to apply surface treatment to the part, and at least one of the collar and the flange is sufficiently

elastic and resilient to deform for insertion of the masking member into the at least one open hole such that at least a part of each of the collar and the flange is outside of the hole and extends beyond the circumference of the hole, as provided by the subject matter of claim 2.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that independent claim 2 and the claims depending therefrom are patentable over the cited art.

In view of the remarks hereinabove, Applicants submit that the application is now in condition for allowance, and Applicants earnestly solicit the allowance of this application.

If a petition for an extension of time is required to make this response timely, this paper should be considered to be such a petition. The Patent Office is hereby authorized to charge any fees that are required in connection with this amendment, and to credit any overpayment, to our Deposit Account No. 03-3125.

If a telephone interview could advance the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to call the undersigned attorney.

Respectfully submitted,



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